

# HOME FOR EVERY AMERICAN

## INNOVATION AWARD-HOUSING: Seattle Downtown Emergency Services Center

“**U**ncommon efforts produce uncommon results . . .” That’s the mission statement of Seattle’s Downtown Emergency Service Center’s (DESC), whose 1811 Eastlake project is a Housing First program with onsite supportive services for 75 homeless men and women with chronic alcohol addiction. Nearly half of the residents have a co-occurring mental illness, and almost all have other chronic and disabling health conditions. Chemical dependency treatment and mental health care are provided onsite. Residents are encouraged, but not required, to participate in treatment, and sobriety is not required as a condition of tenancy.

In January 2008, DESC released the first cost benefit analysis for its 1811 Eastlake initiative, demonstrating savings of \$2.5 million in emergency medical care, jail, and sobering center/detox expenses for residents who lived at 1811 for 12 months. Analysts compared utilization expenses 12 months prior to move-in with utilization expenses 12 months post move-in and found the total cost of operation of 1811 for one year is \$1 million.

1811 Eastlake, which opened in December 2005, is the first program of its kind in Washington State, and one of only a handful of programs nationally and internationally, to address the needs of homeless chronic alcoholics who are the highest utilizers of publicly funded crisis services. Residents benefit from 24/7 support including mental health and chemical dependency treatment, primary health care, meals, and counseling assistance.

William B. Hobson, DESC’s Executive Director, oversees the array of emergency shelter and survival services, clinical programs, and supportive housing which reach over 6,500 people annually. DESC’s mission statement demonstrates its commitment to those it serves: “The Downtown Emergency Service Center works to end the homelessness of vulnerable people, particularly those with serious mental and addictive illnesses. Through partnerships and an integrated array of comprehensive services, treatment, and housing, we give people the opportunity to reach their highest potential.” 1811 Eastlake was selected by the Fannie Mae Foundation and Partnership to End Long Term Homelessness for the 2007 “Maxwell Award of Excellence.”